TEF Year Four provider submission

Provider Context

This submission has been developed with input from the Institute's Students' Council.

The Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) is a small (with just over 100 students enrolled on all programmes) UK higher education institute catering for specialised academic disciplines related to Islamic subjects. Established in 2000, it fills an important gap in the UK's higher education provision, offering high quality research and educational programmes in applied Islamic subjects that lead to a range of career paths for graduates. As a pioneering UK Institute in developing and delivering HE programmes ourspecialisms include: Islamic studies, Muslim chaplaincy, Islam and education, Islam and sustainable development, and Islamic economics and finance.

The Institute is amply resourced to provide higher education. Located on an attractive 9.3-acre campus, in the pleasant village of Markfield , ithouses a purpose built (2003) teaching block with a lecture theatre, classrooms, social space and canteen facilities. In addition, it hosts one of the largest libraries in the UK holding Islamic learning resources, offering campus-wide Wi-Fi access, students access to Moodle (virtual learning environment), an on-site mosque, and residential accommodation facilities..

We endeavour to provide quality higher education to ensure our students have the essential knowledge and academic skills to operate effectively in the real world, engage with emerging issues creatively, pursue their personal and professional goals, enhance and improve the performance of the organisations they go on to work in, and provide leadership and service to their communities. The uniqueness of MIHE in the UK higher education sector is derived from its capacity to integrate the richness and high standards of traditional Islamic scholarship with cutting-edge research methods, academic rigour and critical analysis. We endeavour to offer a student learning experience underpinned by high-quality teaching from academics who draw on their disciplinary research and professional practice. By learning through solving problems, independent research and inquiry-based approaches, students develop as reflective, independent and self-directed learners who understand the crucial relationship between research and new knowledge and are motivated to engage in further study.

Our diverse student population also includes an important cohort derived from traditional Islamic schools (*daral ulum*). The Islamic studies courses offered by the *daral ulums* areare not recognised in the UK, resulting in limited career choices for students graduating from these institutions. In recompense,, our HE programmes open up pathways for these students to continue their studies and obtain recognised HE qualifications. Similarly, our other courses, such as, Islamic economics and finance programmes prepare students for the emerging Islamic banking and finance sector, whereas, the Muslim chaplaincy course prepares students for employment serving as chaplains in universities, hospitals, prisons and the armed forces.

As the contextual data shows, our students (male and female - including mature students) come from major cities across the UK. However, they tend to be predominantly from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with fewer community members going into higher education, and less likely to be in highly skilled employment. The majority of students are from a Muslim background due to the nature of the programmes offered and the institution's faith-basis. In view of this, the Institute has developed a learning environment that nurtures the students to enhance completion of their studies and facilitate progress into employment or further studies.

Name of Provider: Markfield Institute of Higher Education
UKPRN: 10023452

The Institute is deeply committed to ensure its students succeed in their studies and future careers. We believe that the success of our students is our success. To ensure our students succeed in their studies and go onto pursue successful careers we carefully consider the level and quality of the learning support we provide . For this, students' engagement and feedback in improving the quality of learning opportunities and enhancing their sense of belonging to the Institute is essential. We, therefore, consider our students as partners in shaping and developing the Institute.

Teaching Quality

Because of the small numbers of students on our HE programmes, we offer small class sizes enabling staff to tailor time, attention, support and teaching to the individual needs of students. The average student numbers per class for 2016-17 were 14 for the BA, and 10 for MA programmes; for 2017-18, the class sizes were 15 for BA, and 8 for MA programmes.

Students are encouraged and supported to achieve academically, grow in confidence and realise their potential. Tutors work with students, individually and in small groups, and provide them with the required support to help them improve the attainment rates and outcomes. The focus of our support is to provide education on research to enable students to learn through their own independent exploration. In addition, staff are directed to inform their teaching by research. We are involved with with students from the commencement of their studies – from initial induction sessions to providing pastoral care and academic support throughout their time at the Institute, including extra-curricular activities and providing basic careers guidance. We aim to create a community of learners on the campus, whereby, students learn from each other as well as from their lectures and own studies.

The table below shows the NSS results for two consecutive years: 2016-17 and 2017-18. The data indicates that students' satisfaction with the quality of teaching has significantly increased since 2016-17. However, we are aware that we need to do more.

		Question categories				
Year	Measures	The teaching on my course	Learning opportunities	Assessment and feedback	Academic support	Learning resources
2016-17	% Agree	82.81	72.92	62.5	72.92	70.83
2017-18	% Agree	92.65	90.2	82.35	88.24	62.75

Since 2014, the Institute has put in place a number of measures to achieve this significant improvement. Contact hours for each module were increased from two to three hours per week. Current and new staff are expected to complete a higher education teaching qualification. Currently, two academic staff are fellows of HEA, three have completed their higher education teaching qualification, and two are in the process of completing. All academic staff have PhDs except two, who are near completion. All staff are research active.

Regular staff training is held to enhance teaching quality. These training sessions also include sharing good teaching practices. This includes online practices for engaging students in their learning outside the formal class sessions. In addition, peer observation of teaching is instituted to ensure ongoing enhancements in the quality of teaching. Senior academics from another UK HEI have been invited to provide feedback on staff teaching sessions. These measures have assisted in improving our teaching quality and as a result impacted on improving students' satisfaction (as indicated in the table above). The QAA Higher Education Review (2016) also identified this as good practice: "The use of external expertise in the internal peer review process, which makes a significant contribution to the development of learning and teaching (Expectation B3)".

We offer ongoing academic support to students through lectures, seminars/tutorial sessions, one-to-one academic support, special academic skills workshops and academic writing surgeries. These aim to provide academic support to help students improve their attainment rates and outcomes. A number of academic support workshops are available to students in addition to their tutorial sessions and individual support provided by tutors. These workshops include reading strategies and critical reading and writing skills; writing effective essay reports, and critical reflection writing; referencing and bibliographies; approaching assignments, revision and examinations; and dissertation workshops.

In addition, the Institute provides a number of mechanisms for the ongoing engagement of students in improving the quality of learning opportunities alongside ascertaining their feedback on the delivery of their programmes. Student representatives are invited to course committees, programme review committees, and academic board meetings. In addition, all students are invited to provide their feedback and evaluation on the delivery of each module – we have in place mid-module feedback and end of module evaluations. These are analysed and issues identified for quality enhancement. All students are also invited to 'tea with the Principal Sessions' (held once each semester, with separate sessions for postgraduate and undergraduate students). The Principal discusses the broader development of the Institute and how students can engage in these, as well as, seeking to understand directly their experiences at the Institute.

As a result of student engagement, a number of changes have been instituted to enhance students' learning experience. The library opening times have been increased, investment was made to improve the quality of campus-wide Wi-Fi, a new computer lab to teach specialised software for qualitative and quantitative analysis was established, and a Students' Council was formed this year as a mechanism to capture students' voice more effectively. The QAA Higher Education Review (2016) also identified this as a good practice: "The culture engendered by the Institute for capturing the student voice, which leads to a high level of engagement in formal committees (Expectation B5)".

External examiners also play an important part in providing an external perspective on students' work and performance, improving input into the enhancement of assessments and opinions on minor modifications to modules and new programme designs.

Regarding NSS results for 'Assessment and feedback', though students' satisfaction has improved (between 2016-17 and 2017-18), we are working with students' representatives to improve this further. In light of students' feedback, during this year assessment feedback templates have been changed to include specific tutor's comments to help students improve their future assessments. This will be monitored to assess the impact of this change.

Students module evaluation data for 2016-17 and 2017-18 indicates high rates of satisfaction with the module delivery and tutor support. For 2017-18, students rated in their evaluation and average of 82% satisfaction.

We analyse students' attainment data for each module and course through programme reviews and the Academic Board. We also take into consideration the results of the NSS and DLHE surveys. In light of the data analysis and students' qualitative feedback, the Institute attempts to put in place structures/means to improve attainment levels through enhancing support or providing more focused support for specific groups of students who are underachieving. The Institute has introduced during 2018-19, non-subject specific academic support, such as, time management planning, developing an individual study/learning plan, and making sense of tutor feedback.

In summary, the above evidence based discussion highlights that the Institute has an effective teaching and learning strategy in place to monitor and enhance the quality of teaching and learning to enable students to achieve their educational and professional goals. Considerable efforts to improve the quality of teaching have been made and are making a positive impact. These efforts

are also continuous. Close communication with staff and students is maintained for feedback and to identify areas for further enhancements.

Learning Environment

The Institute endeavours to provide an intellectually stimulating environment that aims to challenge and stretch students academically, encourage reflective and independent learning. The quality of the learning environment is annually reviewed through the Academic Board and academic committees. We believe that the knowledge and research activities of staff and the quality of the learning resources (including the library, online resources, Moodle and visiting scholars and experts) are essential to providing an environment that is stimulating and conducive to effective learning.

Our students have access to learning resources through the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle), online e-resources (EBSCO databases) and the Institute's library, which is one of the largest depositories specialising in Islam in Europe. It contains over 30,000 books and around 200 journals, together with an extensive collection of archives and press cuttings. The library has dedicated databases for Islamic Studies, such as, Index Islamicus, since 1906, and Islamic Banking and Finance including electronic access to Islamic Finance Information Services (IFIS) database, as well as, the Internet and photocopying facilities. EBSCO database provides e-books and online journals in Law, Religion and Philosophy, Education and Business and Management.

The library also has long-standing arrangement with the British Library for inter-library book loan, which is available to all MIHE students. It is part of a regional library network, linked through the Inspire scheme. Inspire membership allows MIHE library members to visit most public and university libraries in the East Midlands for reference purposes. The collection of learning resources, both books and journal papers (hardcopies and e-learning resources), accessible through the Library and online via the Moodle, offers a rich resource for wider reading and research. . MIHE's learning resources provides both the primary sources and the wider contextual reading necessary to sustain academic activities. New resources are constantly identified and added to update the collection. The library is also located next to Kube Publishing Ltd, which publishes and sells a wide range of cutting-edge academic books on Islam, providing much contemporary research material.

However, despite embedding the above learning resources, the NSS results for the 'Learning resources' category, were the lowest when compared to all other areas of the survey. These results contributed to the depreciation of the overall results. Students' satisfaction decreased in 2017-18 when compared to 2016-17, as shown below.

	2017	**2018**
Learning resources	**70.83**	**62.75**
18. The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well.	56.25	50.00
19. The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well.	81.25	76.47
20. I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to.	75.00	58.82

The reason for the satisfaction rating falling was due to a serious breakdown of the IT system on the campus for three weeks during November 2018, disabling these facilities during this period. T. It took engineers some time to diagnose and resolve the problem. However, the Wi-Fi system has

been recently upgraded to enable students to access learning resources remotely, including from the accommodation blocks on the campus. The system has improved significantly since then. Work is also being completed to connect a new dedicated Internet line to the campus, which should further enhance the system.

Our existing IT infrastructure and support services are adequate, while subject to constant review in light of staff/student feedback. In addition, feedback from staff and studentshighlights a need to subscribe to additional online resources alongside existing access to EBSCO databases. This is currently under consideration.

Current and new staff are expected to be specialists in their subject areas with a PhD and a track record of research. New staff are also expected to complete an higher education teaching qualification, as already mentioned above. . All staff are research active and attend external academic events and research conferences. This ensures that our academic expertise supports students learning effectively.

In addition, leading academics from other UK HEIs are invited to give guest lectures to share cutting-edge research with our staff and students. During 2017-18 seven guest lecturers were invited on topics related to our academic programmes. In addition, two internal research conferences are held each year at which staff and students present their current research in the form of working papers. MIHE has established access to experts from a wide range of institutions working within fields of Islamic education, pastoral care, charities and NGOs, economics, banking, finance, accounting and management. Professionals from these organisations also contribute to different class sessions to share real world experience of their respective fields. These efforts enrich students' knowledge and learning experiences. They have also encouraged students to work towards getting their dissertations academic papers published.

During the forthcoming 2018-19 academic year, peer support will be enhanced enabling students from the lower years to receive assistance from those in the higher years. The aim is to give students the opportunity to gain support and guidance in a relaxed, informal environment from higher year students who have been in the same position. Students opting to give peer support will be provided training to assist them in this role.

Moreover, regular feedback and input from students, external examiners, employers and our alumni, have assisted in identifying new academic programmes that would enhance employment opportunities, and hence, be more relevant to students' interests. In view of this, the Institute is currently in the process of developing new programmes at Bachelors and Masters levels and applying for validation.

In summary, the above evidence based discussion highlights that the Institute has an effective learning environment that academically challenges students and supports them in their intellectual and professional development. Continuous efforts are being made to enhance the learning resources and close communication with staff and students is maintained for feedback and to identify areas for further enhancements.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

As the contextual data shows, our students tend to be predominantly from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They enter higher education with lower educational achievements and therefore, requires greater support than more able students. The Institute provides closer support to our students to enable them to achieve their potential, successfully complete their studies and progress into employment, or further studies. Students are provided academic support by their module tutors and course leaders. In addition, pastoral care support is provided to those seeking personal help to address their emotional and spiritual problems.

Academic writing skills workshops are held when students commence their studies. In addition, writing surgeries are provided for students to obtain support and development, including reviews of their written assignments, thereby, offering advice on further improvements. In addition, the Institute has introduced this academic year a wide range of workshops to support students in their broader personal development, employability skills awareness and career planning. These include: information age employability skills awareness; personal branding, ethics and integrity; problem-solving approaches and decision making skills; interpersonal and team-building skills; leadership skills; CV and letter of application writing. Students are also informed of job postings via social media and assisted in their job applications.

Moreover, we have an established public speakers series, where guest lecturers who are usually senior academics or professionals are invited to share with students their research or professional experience. It also, invites potential employers from schools, charities, development agencies, and other fields to give presentations to students and staff.

The Institute is validated by Newman University, which issues HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report) to all students graduating from its programmes. This provides a basis for encouraging students to identify the broader social and employability skills/experience they wish to gain/develop during their studies at the Institute to help them in their future personal and career development. Students are then supported to engage with opportunities beyond the curriculum to develop these skills and experiences, and in recording appropriate achievements in relation to these.

We are also working with networks of schools, community organisations, financial institutions, charities and development organisations to assist our graduating students to find employment and internships. These organisations are invited to attend our annual students' day (which is linked to one of the open days) to meet our students and discuss career opportunities.

Our 2017-18 data suggests that the continuation rates on programmes are high. For level 5 students we have an 82.3% continuation rate; for level 6, 95%; and for level 7, 98%. Our analysis of level 5 non-continuation data suggests that those students who decide to discontinue their studies do so primarily due to changes of personal circumstances, rather than a lack of academic support. However, we are continuing to examine this closer and formulate a strategy to enhance continuation and progression rates.

The DLHE data for the Institute suggests that our graduates predominantly go onto employment or into further studies. However, not many have been successful in finding employment in highly skilled areas. We are working to explore the reasons for this further, and aim to devise a strategy to address this. Currently, the Institute does not have a dedicated careers service due to the small numbers of students. However, we are exploring with neighbouring universities to provide and access their services on our campus for MIHE students.

We recognise that non-academic factors also contribute to the non-completion of degree courses. Besides pastoral and welfare support, we assist students who are under financial pressure and who, as a result, are at risk of withdrawing from the Institute. Depending on the circumstances, we provide hardship (bursaries) payments; offer fee discounts and also scholarships where available. In addition, we develop an individual payment plan to help students pay their fees gradually over the academic year, via instalments.

Summary

In summary, the above evidence based discussion highlights that the Institute has an effective teaching and learning strategy, a conducive environment for learning that academically challenges students and supports them in their intellectual and professional development, and a process for supporting students into HE, to succeed in their studies and to progress into employment or further

studies. It recognises that due to its specialised focus, it faces many challenges to expand and support students to progress into highly skilled employment.